

Allied Neighborhoods Association

March 13, 2009

Re: Draft Negative Impact Study
Valle Verde Retirement Community

Planning Commissioners
Community Development Department Planning Division
630 Garden St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Planning Commissioners;

We understand that comments on the negative draft impact study are being accepted by the commission for review. The Allied Neighborhood Associations Board of Directors wishes to urge you to require a full and complete EIR on this project. We find that critical issues are not addressed accurately or completely in the negative draft document.

The question of the proposed commercial use should be addressed in the light of the Conditional Use Permit under which Valle Verde has operated since its inception, to determine if it is an allowed use under the Valle Verde Conditional Use permit.

Traffic: The impacts of the addition of the proposed commercial activity, additional deliveries, additional staff, new residents as well as events for the residents and public events of town organizations is not fully calculated.

The on going issues of speeding on the residential streets has been discussed with Valle Verde officials but is not addressed in the document. The Hidden Valley Park located on Torino and Calle de los Amigos is very popular with families and small children; the speeding by this park is an invitation to an accident. Enclosed is a picture of some of the cars parked on Torino to show the intensity of use in the park. Methods which will reduce speeding on Torino, Palermo and Calle de los Amigos should be addressed. Commercial businesses are in the business of making money; placing commercial operations deep within a residential area, their demand for customers and impacts resulting from the additional traffic need to be calculated.

Currently the parking demand of Valle Verde staff is not being met. Calculations of the number of staff, guests, and new residents show that the parking proposed does not meet the demand. The manner in which the supply is figured does not mitigate the impacts.

Concern about the ability to exit the area is not addressed. There are two roads serving the facility, Calle de los Amigos and Torino Drive. Torino has exits onto Modoc and Veronica Springs Rd. Veronica Springs Rd is a substandard narrow road, Torino Drive and Calle de los Amigo both exit onto Modoc Rd. which has a legal speed of 45 mph. When there is an accident on US 101, a fire, or at peak times, it is difficult to make a left turn onto Modoc Rd. We have had this situation happen frequently. You can also at peak time find a line of 25 cars waiting to turn from Modoc onto La Cumbre. Turning right from Torino Drive or Calle de los Amigos onto Modoc places you into a level D intersection of 101/Modoc/Calle Real and Las Positas. Not only does this intersection operate below city standards, but it is currently being considered as an off ramp for Cottage Hospital employees who will take Calle Real after it is converted into 2 lanes. The ability of Valle Verde residents, as well as the existing

residents of the area, to evacuate in time of emergency needs to be addressed and mitigated. In the last 5 years there has been at least one accident per year on the corner of Calle de los Amigos and Modoc the last being in Feb. of this year (09). (Santa Barbara Police Report) The need for safe ability to exit this intersection needs to be addressed.

This area is also in the high fire hazard area. Arroyo Burro Creek as well as Campanile Hills are considered to be high fire hazard areas. In the last few years there have been 2 fires that threatened this area. The Painted Cave fire burned to the back of Valle Verde and another was in the creek area across from Valle Verde. In the past 45 years there have been 4 fires, Campanile Hills, two in the creek, and the Painted Cave fire. The ability of emergency equipment to get into the area as well as residents being able to leave should be addressed. Currently Valle Verde has emergency equipment responding into their area on the average of once a week.

We find it confusing that Eilings Park and Hillside House are required to do EIRs regarding their impacts in the valley, while this project received a negative declaration. Yet this project impacts the same area and congested intersections.

The loss of open space should be addressed. The city policy is to place density in the downtown core, and low density on the perimeter of the city. This proposed increase will generate a very dense project and should be evaluated in regard to this city policy. Previous Valle Verde projects have been presented as final build out of the area; how many more additions will the future hold?

We have concerns about the soil study as there is a long history of slope failure in the area. The picture enclosed, taken on the slopes above Valle Verde last year, shows slide areas covered by mustard plants (yellow) which is one of the first plants to re-grow when the soil is disturbed. It also should be noted that a portion of Hidden Valley Park has become unusable all year round with water drainage. These are all indicators that a complete soil stability study needs to be done.

Preservation of the existing oak trees and mature trees on the site is important to the appearance. The original landscape plan should be reviewed to correct changes that have been made over the years. There have been major trees removed and not replaced.

There is a lack of discussion about the demolition and construction problems. Control of dust and the assurance that worker parking will be contained on the Valle Verde site are needed. There also needs to be recognition that the adjacent neighborhood streets are to be kept clean from dirt. Trucks and cars parking on wet soil carry the mud throughout the area. Trucks removing the debris driving through neighborhood streets need to be covered and their speed controlled. The noise of the construction is a factor that will also affect adjacent neighborhoods. The valley is very susceptible to noise as the speakers at Earl Warren can be heard from Hidden Valley and so the noise of construction should also be mitigated.

All these issues need to be addressed in a full EIR and we request that one be prepared. This is a very large project, the construction time is for over a year and its impacts on Valle Verde residents as well as the adjacent neighborhoods need to be fully examined and mitigated. Thank you for your consideration.

Judith Dodge Orias president
Allied Neighborhood Association